

25X1 19 October 1960

CHINESE COMMUNIST ATOMIC ENERGY PROGRAM

I. The status of the Chinese Communist atomic energy program has just been carefully reviewed in connection with a recent national estimate.

A. We believe Chinese have given very high priority to nuclear weapons program in belief that a demonstrated capability to produce nuclear weapons would confirm their claim to great power status.

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II.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] we know that Soviet assistance to peaceful uses aspects of the Chinese program has been extensive.

- A. Soviets have given Chinese a 7.5 - 10 MW research reactor and a cyclotron, and have assisted Chinese in building numerous laboratories.
- B. In what we estimate to be present state of Chinese competence, carrying out of fissionable materials production programs requires significant Soviet assistance in form of technicians, designs, and equipment.
1. Soviets have apparently been moving at deliberate pace in assisting Chinese in the military nuclear fields, seeking to hold Chinese impatience and discontent at level consistent with Soviet view of best interests of the Sino-Soviet relationship.

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- III. Chinese, with Soviet assistance, have engaged in concentrated effort to prospect for and mine uranium ores since early 1956, and numerous deposits of uranium have been discovered with over ten being exploited.
- A. We estimate that ore with uranium metal equivalent of several hundred tons being mined annually and retained by China.
 - B. Chinese also have probably initiated processing uranium ores into metal.

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- C. [REDACTED] Chinese may
currently be building plutonium production reactor. 25X1
1. May also be building U-235 gaseous diffusion plant [REDACTED]

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- IV. On basis of this information, we believe that most probable date at which Chinese could detonate first nuclear device is sometime in 1963, though it might be as late as 1964, or as early as 1962, depending on actual degree of Soviet assistance.
- A. Given direct Soviet help in fissionable materials designs and fabrications, Chinese could produce nuclear detonation at almost any time in immediate future.
- B. On other hand, if Sino-Soviet dissensions result in lessening of Soviet assistance in nuclear field, Chinese progress would be substantially retarded.
1. While explosion of nuclear device would give Chinese political and propaganda rewards, they would almost certainly proceed to create operational nuclear capability as quickly as feasible.
2. However, it would take several years after explosion of a nuclear device to produce significant weapons stockpile.
3. Given economic limitations and realities of geography, they would probably rely initially on aircraft as delivery vehicles.
4. Since Soviets have apparently given Chinese no assistance in missile delivery systems to date, we do not foresee a Chinese missile delivery capability prior to 1968-1969.

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